A Parent's Guide to Calling the Doctor

Give the following information every time you call:

- Your name and phone number (s)
- Your child's name and date of birth
- The symptoms your child has
- The urgency of your call (very urgent, call needed today, not urgent)

Calling during business hours:

- If you would like an appointment, speak to the receptionist and schedule the appointment
- If you believe your child has a life threatening emergency, call our office and state "This is an emergency".
- If you would like medical advice and do not want an appointment and it is not an emergency, leave a message so our nurse can call you back. The nurse will usually call you back within 3 hours. Often calls will be returned during the lunchtime break or between patients, when possible. If you haven't heard from us within this time frame, you may call back, and state that you have been waiting three hours and we will bring this to the attention of our nurse or doctor.
- If you leave a message for the doctor, the doctor will return your call, within 24 hours, often at the end of the day.
- If you think your child may need to be seen, or you need to talk to the doctor urgently, please ask to speak to the nurse. She may be able to help with the problem or get guidance from the doctor within a few minutes if necessary.
- Please do not have the doctor paged during office hours to request an appointment.

Calling after hours:

- All calls are answered by our answering service if the office is closed. If you do call about an emergency please state "this is an emergency" and the answering service will page the doctor.
- PLEASE: keep the phone free, make sure caller ID has been unblocked and remain at home.
- If you do not hear from the doctor within 20 minutes, please check with the answering service to be sure they took down your name and phone number correctly and that your phone is receiving incoming calls.

It is not necessary to call the doctor or to go to the emergency room if your child is over 3 months of age and develops a fever during the night unless other symptoms develop which are worrisome. Dosages of fever medication are available on our website. Please DO call for advice concerning an illness with fever DURING office hours. Fevers are generally worse at night and improve during the day, often returning again at night. The cause of the fever at night is best determined by an office visit during routine office hours. We are available 365 days a year for those types of visits.

When speaking with the nurse or doctor:

- You know your child the best, tell us what is different and of concern
- Tell us about any chronic illnesses or if your child is NOT immunized
- Report any immunizations (shots) your child has received recently or if your child was recently started on any new medications or treatments or was seen recently for this illness.
- Remind us of any allergies your child has
- If you don't understand the advice or instructions given, please ask us to repeat or clarify them

If an examination is NOT needed, at the end of the call you should know the most likely cause of your child's condition, which medicines or treatments should be given and what signs or symptoms to watch for. You should also understand when you should call us again.

If your child needs an appointment, when traveling by car, even during an emergency, drive carefully and slowly and place your child in his car seat. If you are too nervous to drive to our office, ask a friend or call a taxi. After examination by our doctor, if an ambulance is needed to take your child to the hospital, our staff will call one.

Call immediately for infants younger than 3 months of age, if the baby:

- is lethargic (very sleepy or difficult to arouse), has poor color, or appears limp and unresponsive.
- has a rectal temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher.
- hands or feet have a yellow "jaundiced" color, or if the baby develops orange skin.
- refuses to eat 3 or 4 times in a row.
- has a labored, wheezing or "grunting" breathing pattern that lasts longer than one-half hour
- has an illness associated with a rash that looks like bruising.

Call and schedule a same day appointment if:

- if you feel very nervous about your baby's illness or general condition.
- the baby is extremely irritable or has a high-pitched cry that lasts longer than 1 hour.

Call and schedule a same day appointment for older children, if your child:

- seems unresponsive, does not make eye contact with you, or has cold and clammy skin that is not associated with vomiting.
- looks much sicker than usual with a "routine" illness.
- there is a rash that looks like bleeding under the skin or red freckles.
- has severe stomach pains that last longer than 2 hours, especially when they are located in the lower part of the abdomen.
- if vomiting has lasted longer than one day or if there is blood in the stool or vomit.
- appears dehydrated with a dry mouth or has not urinated in over 8 hours.
- has any symptom that you believe to be unusual or frightening. For example, labored breathing, severe headache, or very high fever (over 105°F).

Call Immediately after injury or ingestions if:

- your child has struck his or her head and has lost consciousness, has nausea or vomiting or complains of severe headache. Also report any of the following: mental confusion, unbalanced walking, poor coordination, loss of memory or fluid coming from the nose or one or both ears.
- there is a persistent swelling, tenderness or deformity of the injured part.
- your child refuses to use an injured arm or leg for more than one hour.
- there is injury to an eye that causes redness, pain or tearing for more than 15 minutes.
- your child has been bitten by an animal and the bite has gone through the skin.
- you need first-aid instructions for uncontrolled bleeding or other problems.
- you believe that your child may have swallowed a toxic or poisonous substance, you can call us. Information can also be obtained from the Poison Control Hotline at (800) 222-1222.

Call about non-urgent illnesses during office hours and schedule an appointment if:

- you feel nervous or concerned about your child's general appearance.
- your child has a symptom that comes and goes over an extended period of time.
- an illness or symptom seems to be getting worse or lasts longer than expected.
- there is fever of more than 101°F (38.3°C) in a child under 12 months of age or in a child over 12 months that has persisted for more than 48 hours or is associated anytime with concerning symptoms to you. A fever alone in a child over 12 months of age in an otherwise well-appearing child is not of concern until that time.
- an isolated sore throat has lasted longer than 2 days.

- a cough, runny nose or cold has lasted longer than 10 days.
- a symptom seems more severe than it has in the past.
- your child has a rash or other problem and you are not sure what is causing it.

Call and speak with a nurse if:

- you are not certain whether the child needs to be examined by the doctor.

Shared: WEBSITE/A parent's guide to calling the doctor
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